

The LMJ Nostalgia Pages

RANDOM

Channel Tunnel

In the early 1980s there was much debate on the idea of constructing a fixed crossing for the English Channel. Several plans were proposed, both tunnels and bridges, and at the time I was working for the British Steel Corporation. We in the steel industry were hoping that it would be a bridge – it would have needed lots of our product!



The speedy way to cross the channel. Grandma Johnson and the Juckles clan stand ready to board.

Around that time, our family took a holiday down in Kent and while there we decided to make a day trip to France. The normal ferries were cheaper but we decided that as an adventure for the children it had to be the hovercraft. We had a great day in Boulogne, and the novelty of it all made up for the bumpy ride and the lack of any clear view through the spray-covered windows. For a while that trip was a theme in our conversations, and to amuse the children I put together a poem on the topic. Recently I found it while going through some old papers.

Tunnel Timeline

*In Ice Age days when the English Channel was only ten feet wide
The cavemen threw a log across to reach the other side.
As Og tiptoed his way across he felt his footing go.
He fell into the icy drink
And his comrades heard, as they watched him sink,
His voice come gurgling from below
“We should have dug a tunnel!”*

*When Julius Caesar conquered Gaul and reached the coast at Calais
He gazed across the stormy sea and then turned to his valet.
“We’ll take that island next,” he said, “but how’ll we get across?”
The valet looked at the ships in the dock
His face turned green as he watched them rock
So he swallowed hard and said to his boss
“Please, can’t we dig a tunnel?”*

*Back in the year ten sixty-six, King Harold sat the throne
But William down in Normandy said England was his own.
He summoned all his nobles and he told them to prepare:*

*"I'm going to take a fighting force,
"Ten thousand men, their arms and horse,
"A mighty fleet to get us there
"It's too far for a tunnel."*

*Sir Francis Drake was playing bowls when an urgent message came
"The Spanish fleet has put to sea, so you must do the same."*

*Sir Francis bowled another ball and then said with a smile,
"There's lots of time to win this war,
"No foreign foe will get ashore.
"The only way they'll reach this isle
"Is if they dig a tunnel."*

*Napoleon mastered all of France, and half of Europe too.
He sent a message to his fleet to tell them what to do.
"When the English fleet is sunk", it said, "invasion goes ahead.
"Your ships will take my army there."
His admiral wrote back in despair.
His letter from Trafalgar read:
"You'll have to dig a tunnel."*

*When Tommy Atkins reached Dunkirk he marched down to the beach
Where shells fell all around him but the ships were out of reach.
The small boats came inshore and started taking men on board.
As Tommy waited in the line
Up to his waist in freezing brine
His mates agreed with one accord:
"We wish there was a tunnel."*

*Joe Bloggs and wife reached Dover, having bought their ferry ticket
But the boat was still in Calais docks surrounded by a picket.
They joined the five-mile queue of cars that stretched down to the port.
With children clamouring for the loo
And his radiator boiling too
He looked across the sea and thought:
"When will they dig a tunnel?"*

Written around 1980!

